

NECE Expert Workshop
“Crossing Borders. Migration and Citizenship Education in Europe”

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Presentation
Panel II: Citizenship education in societies facing migration and diversity: Do we need new approaches?

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A brief introduction of the Tom Lantos Institute

- A human and minority rights institute
- Working at the intersection of human rights and identity politics
- Embracing a holistic and pluri-disciplinary approach to human rights
- Bringing a human rights education (HRE) perspective in to the panel and expert meeting.

I would like to make four points in my presentation:

1. Selection of a **few challenges faced by human rights education actors in V4 countries**, all of them being interrelated:
 - Gap between the commitment of governments on paper (all EU member states have committed to establish HRE in schools) and the implementation of their HRE strategies;
 - Lack of interest from policy-makers, schools, but also indifference of society at large when it comes to HRE;
 - Lack of appropriate teacher’s training;
 - Unsupportive and often undemocratic school environment (violence, conflicts, strict hierarchy);
 - No mainstreaming of HRE in school curricula, rather *ad hoc* initiatives, usually implemented by CSOs:
 - Lack of sustainability of such initiatives (problem of funding, human resources, partnership with schools, etc.)
 - Some of these initiatives are problematic in themselves;
 - Problem of teaching values in a specific and limited setting (e.g. 1h/month, or once a year during a “human rights week”, etc.), which are then contradicted or at least not supported by the whole environment pupils live in (family, school, broader social environment).

- Calling into question of human rights as “Western”, “foreign”, theoretical concepts that are irrelevant for people, who face (socio-economic) hardship in their daily lives;
 - Diverging, sometimes contradicting perceptions of what HRE is and how it should be implemented (e.g. compulsory voluntary service in Hungary contradicts the principle of HRE that is also education *through* human rights);
 - Lack of trust among various stakeholders dealing with human rights and HRE (CSOs, schools, policy-makers, public institutions, pupils and parents, etc.)
 - Loneliness of people actively engaged in HRE (e.g. teachers who take up the issue are often marginalised in their own schools).
2. Lack of connection between anti-prejudice education and HRE, but also between the teaching of history (e.g. Holocaust education) and current human rights issues or violations. Cf 2011 FRA report highlighting the complete lack of connection between Holocaust education and human rights education in 21 EU member states, as well as the complete lack of understanding of pupils and teachers of what human rights are. Little connection is made between prejudice, discrimination, genocide, human rights, citizenship, etc., hence it is difficult for learners to see and make sense of the whole picture. HRE as such is nearly inexistent in school and universities (including in law study programmes), and when it exists it tends to be quite legalistic. At the same time anti-prejudice education is not enough, a.o. because it doesn't take into consideration issues of recognition of group difference.
3. Lack of socialisation and education of minority rights and issues connected to minorities (substantial equality, nexus between recognition and redistribution, parity participation, etc.). Currently the dominant approach within the HR discourse focuses on anti-discrimination, being thus rather assimilationist and tending to ignore the specific needs of, and issues faced by minoritised groups.
4. Our own position, role and responsibility as (HRE) actors: How do we shape norms? How do we produce, reproduce, reinforce, and alter structures that also shape us? How do we contribute to structures and norms that we also contest? For instance, how can we explain the rise of racist incidents in Britain following Brexit, i.e. what does it say about the state of society, but most importantly about our work in/on human rights?

Finally, I would like to share two main recommendations:

1. Building platform and bridges and opening up to “new”, or usually forgotten actors, issues, narratives:

- **Geographically:** regionally (e.g. Central Europe, V4, etc.), between “West” and “East”, EU and non-EU countries, Europe-Mediterranean region, etc.
- **Across actors:** bring together teachers, educators, CSOs, but also educational policy-makers, decision-makers at all levels (schools, universities, ministries), curriculum designers, national human rights institutions (NHRI: ombudspersons, equal treatment authorities, etc), relevant individuals (parents, students, + their representatives), and private actors (companies);
In particular, **the role of NHRI** can have a big impact on the socialisation of human rights in society: because of their independence and legitimacy, they can support, endorse, publicise, and legitimise the work of CSOs and other HRE actors.
- **Across disciplines and issues:** law, history, political sciences, sociology, social psychology, etc; include issues like identity, memory (collective memory, memory politics, memorialisation, etc), reconciliation, minority rights, etc.

2. Make HRE more accessible

- Through mainstreaming HRE in school curriculum;
- But most importantly from the point of view of language and content:
 - The language of human rights is often difficult to understand for non-experts;
 - A strong emphasis is put on civil and political rights (1st generation of human rights), but much less on social, economic and cultural rights, as well as solidarity rights (group rights, peace, development, environmental rights) although they are as relevant (and might seem even more relevant) to people’s lives.